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THE
P L E A
O F
Publick Good

Not sufficient to Justifie

The Taking up Arms
AGAINST OUR
Rightful and Lawful Sovereigns.

I N A
L E T T E R
To the REVEREND
Mr. H O A D L Y.

And not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil, that good may come, whose damnation is just. Rom. 3. 8.

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MINSTER. 1706.

THE COMPANION

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LETTER

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*The Plea of Publick Good not sufficient to
justifie the taking up Arms against our
Rightful and Lawful Sovereigns.*

Reverend Sir,

THE main Principle which you build upon in your Sermon preach'd before my Lord Mayor, &c. 29th Sept. 1705, and which you still prosecute in the defence of the Doctrine then delivered, seems to me to be the *Plea of Publick Good*, which, when invaded by the *Sovereign*, gives, you think, the Subjects a *Right and Title* to resist him; and that in such a case *Passive Obedience* is so far from being a *Christian Virtue*, that it degenerates into a very *criminal Omission*. Now the Design of this Application is not to provoke you by any severe Reflections, for I find your Temper is not able to bear them, and then I am sure you will be much the worse for my writing to you; but only calmly to offer to you some serious Considerations upon that Subject, which I beg you would weigh with all that Coolness which is necessary in matters of this nature: And I pray God they may be effectual to recover you from those dangerous and fatal Errors which you seem to have espoused with great positiveness.

Now here, I think, it might be not only pertinent but sufficient to ask, what is that *Publick* whereof you so frequently speak? Is it not that whereof Kings are the Head? So that the Good of the Publick, which is of so much

Force, and lays all this Obligation, must be their Good and our Good in Conjunction. It takes in the Head as well as the Members, and is their seeking Good together with and under it, not separating their own Good from the Sovereigns, and looking only to themselves, which is a pulling of the Publick, whereof the Sovereign is Head, to pieces.

But since you lay such great stress upon this Plea, I shall give it a farther Consideration.

The intent of it is to set up *Publick Good*, not only as the *End* and *Motive* of *Allegiance*, but as the *just Ground* and *Measure* thereof. As the *End* and *Motive* of *Allegiance*, it would be enough for the Publick Good to be always served by it more or less, or in a greater degree in ordinary course, without pretending to set it aside, and over-rule it in any particular case, where it happens otherwise : But as the true *Ground* and *Measure* of all conscientious Obligation to *Allegiance*, such degrees of Publick Good would influence and over-rule it in all particular cases ; so that *Allegiance* to any Person would be a Duty, whilst it proved to make *for* such Interest of the Publick, but no Duty where it happen'd to make *against* it.

Now *Publick Good* is the *End* and *Motive* of *Allegiance* ; 'tis the *End*, as being the Fruit and Effect of it ; and well may it be a *Motive* to it, since nothing we can propose would more advance this Publick Good, than *Allegiance* duly and inviolably practised. The *Publick Good* is what all Governments and all Governours gain, tho' in degree unequal, some more and others less. *He is the Minister of God to thee for good*, was true when *Nero* reigned. In comparison of other Governours, *Nero* and others of his Character, were great and publick Ills ; but in comparison of no Governours, they are of Advantage to the Publick ;

Publick ; for all Men of brutish Dispositions would then be as so many *Nero's*, so far as their Power would reach ; so that the Benefit and Protection of Government, tho' under him, would be rated, and justly too, as a publick Blessing. The very worst Governors are incomparably better than none, Tyranny than Anarchy, or than Redress by casting off Allegiance, and Rebellion.

So that *Allegiance* does serve the publick Good in ordinary and constant Course ; the Publick has always Benefit by all, even the worst Governors, tho' it would have more by better. It has not always an equal Benefit indeed, as it is impossible it should, whilst Governors are Men, and not all equally fortunate, or fitted to promote it ; but this inequality of this effect at divers times, is inseparable from general Rules, which are made to be one and the same for all Times, and under all Persons. And the Method of seeking publick Good is not left loose, so as to be under no Rules, but has a great many Rules fixt for it (whereof Allegiance is one) and is to be served by them as Rules can serve it. And therefore the publick Good, which is the End of all Allegiance, and all other general Rules, is not one equal Tenour of Good, but in degree unequal, sometimes more, sometimes less (tho' always abundantly more, as I say, than without any Government) according as in different Times and Places the Governours or governed have the care or good fortune to advance it.

Now from this it appears, as to that greater degree of publick Good, which is always coveted, and is more usually got by Allegiance, that as it is the Motive to it, where it follows it, yet must it not discharge from it in any case, where we have only a less degree left to move us, and the greater fails. No other means without Government and Allegiance drawn into a general Rule,
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would so ordinarily and so much promote the great Benefit and Comfort of the Publick, as Allegiance. And if the keeping of Allegiance should seem to any one at some time not to serve that degree of publick Good, so well as the casting it off would; that rare and accidental Disservice must be overborn by the Goodness of the general Rule, and is abundantly compensated by the general and ordinary Convenience. And this is no more than what we see it is in all general Rules to this purpose.

All the Commandments of the *Second Table* (whereof the *Fifth* requiring Allegiance is at the top, and is as sacred and inviolable as any of the rest) are *Social Virtues*, and have for their End the Good of Society, or publick Benefit; but they are not to be suspended or set aside in any particular case, where that publick Good seems better served by their Contraries. *Thou shalt not kill*, for instance, is one general Rule for the publick Good: But if a Man is never so ill an Instrument, or mischievous to the Publick, this Commandment may not therefore be broken to get rid of him, on pretence that the Breach in this case better serves the Publick, than the keeping thereof doth. Again, *Thou shalt not bear false witness*, tho' it be for the same intent, yet it is not to be broken against such a Person on the like Pretension. *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, is another Precept for the publick Good; but yet for the Publick's sake, where the Publick and the Crown stand in greatest need of an Heir, this Rule is not to be transgress'd to procure one. *Thou shalt not steal*, and *thou shalt not covet*, are likewise Rules for the common Benefit; but if a wealthy Man is so stingy, that he will do no good with what he has; or so vicious, turbulent and mischievous, that he doth great and common Hurt therewith; yet it is not lawful on this pretence, to cozen or steal from him, tho' it were to put
into

into the publick Coffers, and at a time when the publick labours under great Necessities.

Thus are Allegiance and all the other Commandments of the Second Table, general Rules, whose End is publick Good ; and they all excellently serve it, and ordinarily compass greater and more comfortable degrees thereof ; but yet at the same time, they will none of them bear to have it set up against them to make any Exceptions ; they are only to be kept, never to be broken or transgressed for it. Be the Good publick or private, all seeking of it must be without Infringement of these moral Rules, and *we must never do evil that good may come*, as St. Paul says, *Rom. 3. 8.*

Publick Good then being only the Motive, the End and Recompence of Allegiance, will never give discharge from it. Some publick Benefit, which is the constant End, is the constant Effect of it, and attained by the worst Government. And as for greater degrees, they are ordinary Recompences thereof ; but when they are not, they are not to rule it, but it is to rule them ; they are never to be set up in opposition, nor to be sought by renouncing of Allegiance, or casting off a just Authority ; but always by keeping under it, and standing or falling with it.

But then as for the other point of *Publick Good* (*and the greater the better, when such in reality*) *being the just Measure and Ground of Allegiance* ; this indeed may seem to make it influence all particular cases, as being that alone, which ties on any one of them upon the Conscience. And this, I think, would make a Conditionality in Subjects Duty, and give them a discharge from serving and seeking the Good of their Rulers, when once they could more advance the real Good of the Society under others.

But now that the meer pretence of such advance of publick

lick Good, cannot justify us in taking up Arms against our rightful Sovereigns, beside what it does from the preceding Observations, may still farther appear, in my Opinion ; because,

First, this way *there would be no Allegiance due to tyrannical Powers*, either *Oppressors* that invade our Properties, or *Persecutors* that grievously afflict us for Religion, and a good Conscience. For these, tho' in comparison with no Government, are a publick Good, yet in comparison with other Governors, they are confessedly among the greatest publick Ills ; and touch us in the two tenderest points of publick Good, *Religion* and *Property*. But on the contrary, Allegiance is still due to such Persons ; *David* ought it to *Saul*, who was guilty of the Blood of so many Innocents, and notwithstanding his Government was so great a Burthen and Grievance to the Common-wealth. And the *Doctrine* of the Gospel under *Persecutors*, is not *Liberty* and *Freedom from Allegiance*, but *Faith*, and *Patience*, and *taking up the Cross*, by being obedient as to the *good and gentle*, so also to the *froward*.

The great Advocates for Liberty of Resistance, and shaking off the Yoke of ill Kings, still allow a Duty and Necessity of suffering under Persecutors, when the *Laws of the Land* are against *Religion*. But how does this consist with the plea of such publick Good giving a Discharge from it ? for publick Persecution, I think, is as much against publick Good, and as publick an Ill (that involves as many, and plunges them as deep) when 'tis carried on by a Law, as when 'tis carried on against it ; nay, in my opinion, 'tis much more against publick Good to have a Law for it ; and the Instruments that act therein are like to be more restrained and cautious, when they persecute against Law, than when they have a Law to bear them out. And how otherways could Laws for Religion be esteemed a publick
Blessing,

Blessings, and Laws against it, as the greatest publick Grievance? So that if the mere consideration of such publick Good, could give a Discharge from our Allegiance to lawful Authority, we should all be here let loose, when yet all own we are still fast bound in Allegiance.

Secondly, There would be no *Allegiance due in absolute Governments*. The Ground that is most urged for superseding Allegiance, is a King's breaking in upon the Constitution, setting aside the Laws, and turning a limited and legal, into an arbitrary and despotick Government; which once done, as several have urged, a King ceases to be a King, and there is no more Allegiance due to him. So that arbitrary Power, or making his own Will go for Law, is reckoned the greatest publick Ill a legal Monarch can commit, and an utter Breach of that publick Good, which is to tie on Allegiance to any Government. But now as for publick Good, arbitrary Power is as much against it in one as in another Government; it matters not as to the Benefit of the Publick, whether it is arbitrary at first or at last; for Arbitrariness once got in is every where and still the same, and the Publick equally suffers by it. As it discharges Allegiance in the end, when fasten'd on the best Constitution, so should it from the beginning (if it be a sufficient Discharge) when born together with the worst.

But this we see it has not done, for the People of God in the earliest Times lived most under such Governments, as was in great degree that of the *Affyrians* and *Romans*. And yet instead of being then discharged from Allegiance, it was most carefully and strictly bound upon their Consciences. And therefore supposing a Sovereign should endeavour to turn a limited into an arbitrary Monarchy, yet unless Allegiance could be some other way set aside, this pretence of publick Good would not discharge us from it.

When, if we rightly consider it, could the pretence of
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publick Good on either of these two forementioned Accounts have been farther carried, than under such Monsters of Men as *Nero* and other persecuting and arbitrary Oppressors in the *primitive* Times. To whom yet when it cost the Publick most, instead of having any Discharge, their Christian Subjects were required to pay a strict and conscientious Allegiance.

I have chose to insist upon these instances of publick Good, they being the highest, and such as Men would go farthest to secure; and if to preserve any publick Good, we should cast off Allegiance, I believe you will allow, as well as the other Advocates for this Plea, that it should be to preserve these.

Thirdly, It is not really for the publick Good to endeavour a Cure of the worst Governments by casting off Allegiance. This Method brings in more and greater publick Evils than it removes. More Money is spent, I believe, in taking up Arms and waging War against an ill King, than would go to bear and defray all his Exactions. Abundance more Blood is shed, and Lives lost perhaps in one Battel, than would ever be by his illegal Executions. More real hurt by far is done to our Holy Religion by Wars, especially Civil Wars, than by Persecutions. Nay in these as we see in the Design of the Gospel, and experiment in the course of Providence, when religious Men fall by the greatest Sufferings, Religion it self conquers and acts the greatest Triumphs. Besides, this Liberty would give more Opportunity to the restless and ambitious to seek Change, than to the truly grieved and oppressed to take a wise and just Season wherein to seek Redress. It would open a wide Door to endless Confusions, and create many more and much greater Evils to the Publick, than it would ever cure.

Fourthly, This mistakes the true ground of Allegiance, which is Authority, not Convenience. The Powers are of God, and are Ministers of God, and he that resists, resists the Ordinance
of

of God, therefore you must needs be subject : These are the Scripture Grounds. The Duty and Virtue of *Allegiance* lies in *Obedience*, and the Oath for it in our Law, is called the *Oath of Obedience*. And Obedience looks up to, and builds on Authority; we must obey them as being our *Fathers*, as being in *God's place*, and his *Vicegerents*, as we are told in the fifth Commandment, and other Scriptures.

Accordingly where lawful Authority is we owe Allegiance, tho' they do not employ it the best to our Interest and Advantage. This keeps us still bound, as I have shewed, under Persecutors and arbitrary Oppressors, who are far from being publick Blessings. It keeps us bound in the same Allegiance to evil as to good Kings; whereas if the Obligation were not to their Authority, but to the measure of the good they do, and the usefulness of their Persons, it would be more to good, and less to ill Governors, and different to the same at different times. It keeps up the Authority of many Laws and Constitutions in every State, which really serve not for publick Good, but publick Detriment: Which yet while they are enforced, and before they are repealed, the Subjects on this pretence must not lay aside as they please; that which their Obedience is to look at in these things, being the Authority of the Imposers, not the Usefulness of the Impositions; and it would look very odd, I think, to found it otherways. For, for a People to profess Allegiance to their Kings only whilst 'tis thus for publick Good, and makes them common Gainers, I think doth not differ much from saying, *They will serve them so long as it stands with their Interest and Convenience*, which would stand ill in an Address of Loyalty and Allegiance.

Lastly, Were publick Good allowed to be as the End and Motive, so likewise the Measure of Allegiance, that publick Good, as I suppose the Advocates for it will confess, must not be what to every Man's Fancy seems best for the publick,

lick, but what the Laws have determined. That must pass for publick Good which is publickly decreed; and it will bring in Anarchy and endless Confusions, the greatest publick Mischief, if we set up publick Good as expounded by private Fancies against the Laws, which are the same declared in publick Judgment or Opinions. And this brings the continuance or cessation of Allegiance, in debate to another Topick, *viz. to our own Laws*; and if we will take that to be good and best for the Publick, which our own Laws have prescribed in this point, I am apt to fancy they will never carry us to cast off Allegiance to ill-Princes, unless they have first quitted their Thrones, and given us a Discharge. And this seems to me the Sense of the *Convention*, for they found the *Liberty for new Allegiance* upon the late *King James's Abdication*.

Perhaps it may be said, what gives discharge, is the publick Good, as judged by the Three Estates of the Realm; so putting it not to meer publick Good, but withal on the particular Frame of our own Constitution. If so, it seems to me to be in the Power of our Three Estates to continue or change our Kings, to make or unmake them as they please. Allegiance to any Prince is to be deemed against the publick Good, when they say it is; they being made both to judge for him and us in this case. And accordingly all are absolved from it, and ought not to pay it to him any longer, after once they have publish'd their Discharges. Now whether this makes the Three Estates the King's Subjects or his Superiors, whether it places the Sovereignty in the King or Queen, or in the People, whether it be holding to Monarchical, or falling into Republican Principles, I shall leave you to judge, and at the same time remain,

Reverend Sir,

March 13. 1705.

Your humble Servant, &c.

FINIS.



